



# CRIME

## IN CALIFORNIA 2003



**Bill Lockyer, Attorney General**  
California Department of Justice  
Division of California Justice Information Services  
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CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATISTICS CENTER

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*The role of the Criminal Justice Statistics Center is to:*

- *Collect, analyze, and report statistical data which provide valid measures of crime and the criminal justice process.*
- *Examine these data on an ongoing basis to better describe crime and the criminal justice system.*
- *Promote the responsible presentation and use of crime statistics.*

# ATTORNEY GENERAL'S MESSAGE

I'm pleased to announce that for the 11th consecutive year, the violent crime rate decreased in California, hitting its lowest level in nearly 30 years. All four violent crime categories – homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault – experienced declines in 2003 from their 2002 rates. Also, two of the three property crime categories, burglary and larceny-theft over \$400, decreased this past year when compared to their 2002 rates. Only one of the seven major crimes, motor vehicle theft, increased in 2003, causing the overall property crime rate to increase 2.0 percent.

The rate for violent crime offenses decreased by 3.4 percent from 2002 to 2003:

- Homicide (1.2 percent of violent crimes) decreased by 1.5 percent.
- Forcible rape (4.8 percent of violent crimes) decreased by 4.2 percent.
- Robbery (31.1 percent of violent crimes) decreased by 3.6 percent.
- Aggravated assault (62.9 percent of violent crimes) decreased by 3.2 percent.

The rate for property crime offenses increased by 2.0 percent from 2002 to 2003:

- Burglary (34.7 percent of property crimes) decreased by 0.4 percent.
- Motor vehicle theft (34.7 percent of property crimes) increased by 6.7 percent.
- Larceny-theft over \$400 (30.5 percent of property crimes) decreased 0.2 percent.

This positive news is no doubt a result of all the hard work and dedication that the entire law enforcement community in California puts forth to enforce our laws and provide for the safety of California residents. It is also the result of the diligence of many neighborhood leaders and community-based organizations who, through their tireless efforts and the positive examples they set, foster an atmosphere that is invaluable in helping to create safer and healthier communities. Their many contributions, including working closely with and assisting law enforcement agencies, are immensely important.

Despite the welcome news of continued declines in violent crime, we must never waiver in our duties to do everything possible to ensure the safety of all Californians. It is vital that we maintain our commitment to provide law enforcement all the necessary tools and resources they need to continue to effectively combat crime. I will continue to promote new technologies and procedures that enhance our ability to solve crimes. I will also continue serious and extensive dialogues with law enforcement experts and criminal justice researchers to develop and implement criminal justice policies and laws that not only are effective in solving crimes, but are also effective in preventing crimes before they occur. Our priority must not only be in solving crimes and fully prosecuting perpetrators, but must also focus on crime prevention.

As Californians, we are privileged to live in our nation's most populated and diverse state. We should continue to strive to make this truly golden state of ours the safest and healthiest environment possible to live and raise our families. As Attorney General, I will continue to do everything in my power to work toward this; you deserve, and should rightfully expect, nothing less.

BILL LOCKYER  
Attorney General

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# HIGHLIGHTS

## CRIMES (See pages 2-23.)

- The violent crime rate increased from 153.1 in 1952 to its peak of 1,103.9 in 1992. The rate has since dropped to 569.4 crimes reported per 100,000 population in 2003. (Source: Table 1.)
- In 2003, the violent crime rate declined 3.4 percent, reaching its lowest level since 1973. (Source: Tables 1 and 2.)
- The decline in violent crime rates was driven by decreases in all four violent offense categories. (Source: Table 1.)
- In 2003, the property crime rate increased 2.0 percent due to a 6.7 percent increase in the motor vehicle theft rate. (Source: Table 2.)

## ARRESTS (See pages 26-63.)

- The 2003 total arrest rate of 5,288.7 per 100,000 population at risk is just slightly higher than the low level reached in 2002. (Source: Table 16.)
- From 2002 to 2003, there was a 2.1 percent increase in the felony arrest rate, influenced mostly by the 3.1 percent increase in the adult felony arrest rate. (Source: Tables 2 and 17.)
- Since 1998, the rate of juvenile felony arrests decreased 33.4 percent and the rate of juvenile misdemeanor arrests decreased 29.6 percent. The rate of status offense arrests (truancy, incorrigibility, running away, and curfew violations) decreased 32.6 percent since 1998. (Source: Table 17.)
- From 1998 to 2003, the homicide arrest rate decreased 21.4 percent. The rate of juvenile arrests for homicide offenses decreased 54.9 percent since 1998. (Source: Table 22.)
- Since 1998, the narcotic arrest rate dropped 27.9 percent while the arrest rate for dangerous drugs increased 14.0 percent. (Source: Table 22.)

## DISPOSITIONS (See pages 66-75.)

- In 2003, 68.0 percent of adult felony arrests resulted in a conviction. (Source: Tables 39 and 40.)
- Probation with jail continues to be the most frequent sentence given for adult felony arrests. (Source: Table 41.)
- In 2003, 16.9 percent of the adults convicted of violent offenses and 18.0 percent of those convicted of drug offenses were sentenced to state institutions (prison, California Rehabilitation Center, and California Youth Authority). (Source: Table 41.)

## ADULT CORRECTIONS (See pages 78-85.)

- Since 1998, the rate of adults under state supervision has decreased 6.5 percent and the rate of adults under local supervision decreased 6.1 percent. (Source: Table 44.)
- In 2003, there was a 1.9 percent decrease in the rate of adults under supervision from 2002. (Source: Table 44.)

**Crimes →**